Developing Canadian Higher Education Capacity for International Credential Transfer Assessment

Groningen Declaration Network Annual Meeting
Puebla 2019

Presented by Dr. Rob Fleming, Joanne Duklas, Mike Winsemann
Agenda

• Setting the stage – Dr. Rob Fleming, British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT)

• Showcasing the national international credential assessment research – Joanne Duklas, Duklas Cornerstone Consulting

• Showcasing the BCCAT / UBC Pilot Project – Mike Winsemann, BCCAT
The Context for International Transfer

- More than 600,000 international students on study permit in Canada*
  - 435,415 are post-secondary students*
  - 154% increase across all categories of international students between 2010 and 2018; 16% increase over 2017**
  - 47% increase in study permits issued from 2015 to 2018*

- Country specific volume increases since 2017: India (40%), China (2%), South Korea (5%+), France (4%), Vietnam (3%)*

- Study abroad: ~50,000 – desire to double; most go to France***

Sources: * https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/90115b00-f9b8-49e8-a9f3-4dcf8facaee - Note: BC specific data for PSI’s not available; data for all levels only
** https://cbie.ca/another-record-year-for-canadian-international-education/
*** http://goglobalcanada.ca/
BC Context

• Long history researching and building capacity to support student transfer and mobility
  • Fully integrated post-secondary transfer system supporting intra-provincial mobility of 55000+ students per year and transfer of 100s of thousands of credits

• High volume of international students come to study in Canada - most go to BC (152,390, 2017) and Ontario (294,350, 2017)*
  • BCCAT - 2014 International student survey (9,200, examined learning and living experiences)**
  • Showcasing two other initiatives today

Sources:
*https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/90115b00-f9b8-49e8-afa3-b4c8f8fae
** https://www.bccat.ca/research/ss
International Credential Study

- National study: International document assessment practices for transfer and exchange/study abroad credit
- Focus: Current practices, challenges, options, identifying recommendations for improvement
- Environment scan, interviews, National survey (95 respondents for 81 institutions – 43% response rate; 82% completion rate)

http://www.bccat.ca/pubs/intl_transfer_credit.pdf
Challenges

- Tracking gap – processes merged with regular processing
- Volume data gap
- Encouraging engagement from faculty

Proxy indicators

- Volume of international students
- National survey
- Qualitative interviews
Typology

- 8 stage process
- Faculty and Registrar’s Office key
- Mostly managed in-house
- Primarily manual
- Reliant on reviewing individual documents
- Advising woven throughout
Student Challenges

• Timely assessment
• Providing documents (official transcripts, course outlines) – 81%
• Receiving recognition for prior post-secondary studies – 72%
• Misunderstanding nomenclature – 70%
• Accessing information – 56%
• Navigating complex processes – 60%
• Paying for document assessments – 26%
Institutional Challenges

- Lack of resources – 83%
- Identifying differences between educational systems – 85%
- Identifying fraudulent documents – 80%
- Determining recognition of prior institutions – 78%
- Accessing official documents
- Internal differences in policy and practice
- Lack of scalable system-wide supports (course equivalency database)
- Untimely decision processes
Quality Assurance & Access Recommendations

• Enhance system-wide quality assurance by providing training for faculty and staff - Enhance resources and tools
• Pre-determine transfer credit equivalencies
• Encourage blind equivalency reviews – focus on evaluating the course, not the student
• Integrate flexible assessment practices (including for prior learning assessment) – European Qualifications Passport for Refugees
Policy Recommendations

• Maintain one policy regardless of source of transfer
• Embrace policies and procedures that support flexibility, a student focus, and respect for international regional diversity; grant credit when non-substantial difference exists
  • Conduct further research into the traditional heavy reliance on course syllabi - “Is it reasonable and efficacious to continue such reliance?”
• Establish strategic partnerships to enhance international credential evaluation capacity
• Embed explicit references to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the supporting Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) into local policy documents and public messaging
Efficiency Recommendations

• Develop document uploading and data exchange with international entities – 87%
• Predetermine transfer credit equivalencies - only those with outstanding equivalencies to faculty for
• Create a system level list of recognized intern
• Endorse and support national and international data exchange projects that hold the promise of establishing trusted connections to international institutions and organizations
• Create a system-wide equivalency and agreement database(s) of international courses and – 73%
Background: BCCAT/UBC Pilot

• BCCAT launched a re-developed version of its Transfer Credit System (TCS) in 2018
• The application is a workflow that allows institutions to create and maintain articulation agreements that are published in the BC Transfer Guide
• The new version of the TCS included features that enabled the creation of national and international agreements
• The TCS is used by all institutions that are part of the BC Transfer System (38 institutions)
• Many institutions (including UBC) maintain internal transfer tables
• Internal transfer tables contain volumes of transfer data that is not publicly available
• The workflow to maintain transfer tables is often inconsistent
• Inconsistent data practices across the institution
Pilot Goals

• Import UBC’s transfer tables into the TCS
• UBC to adopt the TCS for management of all transfer related data
• BCCAT to develop API to enable interface with UBC
• UBC to develop a public facing portal to view transfer arrangements
Project Challenges

- Data clean up was substantial
- Thousands of equivalencies were discarded due to lack of currency or unclear information
- Inconsistent practice in nomenclature for institution names and countries
- Data import process was complex given that data needed to be audited against what was already maintained in the BC Transfer Guide
Outcomes

- 55,000 equivalencies added to the TCS
- Of the 55,000, over 16,000 were to other BC Transfer System members
- UBC Vancouver increased its listings in the BC Transfer Guide by 54%, UBC Okanagan increased its listings by 74%
- Quality Assurance of public UBC website through April with go live in Spring
Value

- UBC is able to use existing BCCAT technology as a workflow rather than develop their own software
- Data from UBC’s transfer tables is available both publicly and to other BC Transfer System partners
- UBC’s institution tables were mapped to the BC standard for institution tables, which are also mapped to PESC GeoCode tables
- Pilot is being operationalized to be extended to all BC Transfer System members, with several institutions currently being scheduled to onboard
- Pilot is an example of the wealth of transfer information that is available within institutions that is not currently being made public
- By providing a platform to enable institutions to support their international equivalencies, it opens the doors for BC to develop an international transfer guide
The Canadian community suggested several recommendations and are working on several projects to improve access and scalability.

Were there any particular recommendations that are similar to what you are doing in your country?
Thank you!

Dr. Rob Fleming: rfleming@bccat.ca
Joanne Duklas: joanne@duklascornerstone.ca
Mike Winsemmann: mwinsemmann@bccat.ca